

Background

Attachés fill influential strategic-level positions within the country team of their respective US diplomatic missions. Depending on the specific billet and country, they serve as the direct representative of the SECDEF; CJCS; the Geographic Combatant Command commanders; the SECNAV; and the Commandant of the Marine Corps. A Marine officer serving as an attaché may also serve as the Senior Defense Official/Defense Attaché (SDO/DATT) or the American Legation United States Naval Attaché (ALUSNA, better known as the Naval Attaché). Attaché duties vary by country and diplomatic mission, but all attachés provide the Chief of Mission (COM) appropriate military information for consideration of political-military situations and issues, and they also administer security assistance activities per appropriate directives in the absence of a U.S. Government security assistance organization in the host nation. The attaché serving as the SDO/DATT directs, controls, operates, and administers both the Defense Attaché Office (DAO), as well as the Security Cooperation Office (SCO), within the diplomatic mission.

DC M&RA, in conjunction with the DIRINT, convenes an annual board to select the most highly qualified personnel to serve within the Defense Attaché System (DAS), representing the Marine Corps, the Department of the Navy, and the Department of Defense in diplomatic missions around the world. This board selects the best qualified officers and enlisted Marines from both the active and reserve components who meet the strict eligibility criteria for service in the DAS. Language, regional and cultural expertise, coupled with sustained superior performance, are the best indicators of future success, and meet the precept criteria established by the SECNAV for assignment within the DAS. The selection board is comprised of representatives from across HQMC with the Commanding Officer, Marine Corps Intelligence Activity (MCIA) typically serving as board president.

Selection to the DAS does not incur any obligated service beyond that required to meet training and assignment timelines, normally ranging from 24 to 60 months.

DAS Training Information

Training at the Joint Military Attaché School (JMAS) is conducted over approximately 14 weeks at the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), in Washington, DC. Language training may be required for some billets, and lasts between 24 to 62 weeks depending on the language and proficiency level required. Training start dates depend upon the country to which selected and assigned. All active duty Marines participating in the DAS are under the administrative control of Commanding Officer, MCIA.

Reserve DAS program selectees will train at the reserve JMAS course for two weeks. DC I RLO will process drill attendance sheets, orders requests, and other administrative requirements associated with this duty.

Application Eligibility

Applications will not be accepted from officers who have been issued orders or have been selected for another program, e.g., CCLEB, CPIB, TLS, Test Pilot, SAW, PEP, et al. Applicants must be eligible for a TOP SECRET clearance with access to Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI). Applying to the MARA board is not sufficient grounds for submission of a Single Scope Background Investigation (SSBI or TS) to determine TS/SCI eligibility.

Application Process

The MARADMIN selection board announcement is typically released by May. Applications are due to HQMC (DC I IID/Intel Division) normally in late July for screening and preparation for the week-long board in August. Selection results are published via MARADMIN later in the fall following SECNAV approval.

Applicants will submit applications through their chain of command, including a command O-6 endorsement.

A complete list of the countries available for each year's panel, along with guidance on preparing your application, are posted to the annual solicitation MARADMIN. Applicants should list available billets in order of preference; however, applicants may be selected for any country based on the needs of the Marine Corps. An individual's specific language, regional, education or cultural expertise will take precedence over individual desires when slating selectees.

For reserve billets, applicants must be a member of the reserve component (SMCR, IMA, IRR) or the active component with a transfer date to the USMCR before the end of the FY. Reserve candidates must have had four satisfactory years of service (50 points minimum each year) during the last five years. Reserve component applications must include a favorable endorsement from the applicant's command (IMA det or SMCR). IRR officers should obtain this endorsement from the Marine Corps Individual Reserve Support Activity (MCIRSA).

Applications must contain the following information:

1. Basic application letter - this letter must be in standard naval format and include the following:
 - a. Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB) score: date, place tested
 - b. Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) information:
 - i. Language(s) and Dialect(s), if applicable
 - ii. Date, place tested
 - iii. DLPT type(s)
 - iv. DLPT score
 - v. General classification test scores
 - vi. Date of rank
 - c. Date current tour began
 - d. Overseas control date
 - e. Summary of military education specifically noting language, foreign area, and international relations training
 - f. Summary of civilian education specifically noting language, foreign area, and international relations studies
 - g. Summary of FAO or RAO oriented experience listing travel and/or military experience in foreign regions and detailing military duties involving interaction with foreign militaries or government representatives
 - h. Written justification (paragraph form) summarizing why applicant would be a successful MARA

- i. Contact numbers including primary, secondary, and tertiary telephone contact information in case the selection panel requires amplifying information during the screening process
- 2. Enclosures to basic letter:
 - a. Enclosure 1 – O-6 command endorsement
 - b. Enclosure 2 – Correspondence from PMOS monitor confirming eligibility (active officers only)
 - c. Enclosure 3 – (8.5 x 11) full body photo of the service member in the service alpha uniform and one (8.5 x 11) full body family photo in business casual for family members and service alphas for service member. These photos will not be used in the board room.
 - d. Enclosure 4 - Standard form (SF) 886 Defense Attaché nomination biography worksheet. Leave the three blocks in the top right blank.
 - e. Enclosure 5 - NAVMED Forms 1300/1 for applicant and each dependent and NAVPERS 1300/16 (Rev. 11-09) for applicant alone as dependents are identified on page 3 (Part ii)
 - f. Enclosure 6 - SF 86 (Version 2016 or higher), signed
 - g. Enclosure 7 – SF 86 for spouse (if married); required even for unaccompanied tours, signed
 - h. Enclosure 8 – Certificate of suitability for overseas assignment
 - i. Enclosure 9 – Letter(s) of recommendation that should include an assessment of the applicant's potential to act as a representative of the Commandant of the Marine Corps and the Secretary of the Navy. At least one, no more than two.
 - j. Enclosure 10 – Written verification from the command security manager or special security officer of a current (within 5 years) SSBI / T5 with a TS/SCI eligibility determination
 - k. Enclosure 11 – Spouse certificate of naturalization (if applicable)
- I. ENSURE ALL ENCLOSURES ARE SEPARATE PDFs**

Applications must arrive at HQMC not later than the date specified in the solicitation announcement MARADMIN, and must be emailed to mara.application@usmc.mil. For questions regarding the application process, please call HQMC (DC I IID/Intel Division) at (703) 693-5421, or email mara.application@usmc.mil.

Enlisted Marines will additionally submit their application via the Special Duty Assignment Miscellaneous RELM in the TFRS via the normal RELM routing chain to CMC (MMEA-25).

References

Naval Correspondence Manual – SECNAVINST 5216.5

Defense Attaché System – MCO 3821.2

Department of Defense Operations at U.S. Embassies – DODD 5105.75

Defense Attaché System - SECNAVINST 1300.16

Conduct of the Board

The MARA selection board is a non-statutory board conducted in the same manner as similar boards, e.g., command screening, TLS. Accordingly, the MARA selection board:

1. Is sequestered
2. Is confidential with all members taking an oath of confidentiality
3. Receives the same briefs from M&RA as all other selection panels and boards
4. Is extremely competitive - FY21 Selection Rate was 30%
5. Selects the most fully qualified officers
6. In addition, the board will consider the following in its deliberations:
 - a. Foreign Area Officer/Regional Affairs Officer, Olmsted Scholar, foreign exchange officer, or similar experience
 - b. Intelligence related assignment
 - c. Security Assistance/Security Cooperation
 - d. International/Strategic engagement (experience or academic)
 - e. Foreign language proficiency and/or cultural experience

Challenges

Selection for attaché requires, among other things, eligibility for a TS/SCI clearance. This requirement **cannot** be waived, and application to the MARA board is not sufficient grounds for submission of an SSBI/TS.

The application package for consideration as a Marine Attaché requires a significant effort and investment in time. Every applicant's attention to detail and desire to be a MARA will be reflected in the quality of the submission.

Each applicant must consider how a MARA tour will affect the progression within their chosen career field/MOS.

Sequential tours outside of the operating forces and in non-primary MOS billets may affect an officer's competitiveness for promotion. When considering an officer's qualification for selection to the Marine Attaché Program, the board considers whether selection would be in the long-term best interest of the officer. Applicants **must** coordinate with their monitor prior to applying.